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## MOBILIZING RURAL PEOPLE FOR WAR EMERGENCIES 1/

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America's entrance into war created many new problems for the civilian population — challenging problems of protection, production, and the development of new attitudes and activities. This study of the mobilization of rural people for war in San Joaquin County was made to determine how such problems have been met in this particular county, the extent to which the methods used were successful, and to serve as a possible example for agencies in developing like action programs in other rural areas. Interviews with persons responsible for war emergency action and schedules taken from various rural families were the two chief sources of information used.

The organizational structure set up to handle the various war programs was detailed and interlocking. Most activities involving rural mobilization were under State and Federal agricultural agencies or under the Civilian Defense organization, though other governmental and private agencies had a place in the picture and some local groups had attempted vital functions. The organizations involved, together with their primary function, were as follows: (1) The County USDA War Board, the agency through which the Federal department administered its "Food for Freedom" program and which acted principally in an advisory and coordinating capacity; (2) the County Civilian Defense Council which was concerned with the protective services of the county; (3) the Rural Defense Division of the County Defense Council which was the "block" organization designed to reach down to the individual farmers of the county and which was initiated by the Farm Adviser immediately after the outbreak of war; (4) all organizations were involved in the critical problem of farm labor with their efforts finally being coordinated under the County Farm Labor Committee headed by the Agricultural Commissioner of the Civilian Defense Council who was designated the Labor Coordinator; (5) local labor procurement associations of the several agricultural districts which collaborated with the Farm Labor Committee and the U. S. Employment Service in their activities to alleviate the local labor situation; (6) the Publicists, a group of prominent local citizens recruited largely from the Stockton Toastmasters' Club. These were mobilized by the Allis Chalmers Company who felt that the company could maintain good will among farmers by working on projects to stimulate the "Food for Victory" program. At first affiliated with the War Board but later with the Farm Labor Committee, this group volunteered to obtain public support for problems and projects facing these agencies, organizing and working in special committees to handle publicity, draft deferments for essential farm workers, transportation pools, cooperation and pooling of farm machinery, and various devices to recruit amateur labor. These several organizations then, the War Board, the County Defense Council, the Rural Defense Division, the Farm Labor Committee, the local labor procurement organizations, and the Publicist group, were those most active in developing programs designed to provide emergency protection to rural areas and to aid agricultural production.

1/ A summary statement based on report "A Study of the Methods of Mobilizing Rural People for War Emergencies in San Joaquin County, California" by Walter R. Goldschmidt and John S. Page.

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The most critical problem in San Joaquin County at the time of this study was the growing agricultural labor shortage. Agricultural production in this county is completely dependent upon a supply of seasonal workers, and in the past the customary supply has been from transient sources. Such a source had been satisfactory until this year at the peak labor season when farmers realized that they were faced with a labor shortage and that they could not depend upon the Federal Government to solve their problem in time. Two primary methods of developing a labor supply evolved: The enrollment of local people as reserve laborers and the use of special inducements to bring in and stabilize regular transient farm workers. The first involved the use of four classes of volunteer workers to supplement the regular professional farm laborers, namely, school children, the "weekend group" (recruited from cities outside the county), housewives and other adults with free time, and the "10 percent group," a final emergency source of labor recruited by industrial and business firms releasing 10 percent of their employees' man-hours for agricultural work. At the time of the study only the first two groups had been effective, the other two still being in the process of recruitment. Even so, some pressure had to be applied to obtain satisfactory cooperation in the recruitment campaigns. The second method involved the activities of the five local labor procurement associations in the county working in cooperation with the U. S. Employment Service and the County Labor Coordinator. The San Joaquin farmers were convinced that the only satisfactory solution of their labor problem depended upon an adequate number of experienced workers. These local labor procurement associations, which varied in efficiency and activity, for the most part were made up of farmers and other interested members who paid a membership fee to support the work of their organization. Their objectives were to secure and hold agricultural labor by providing better housing facilities, by the establishment of a uniform wage scale, and by the "all-out" cooperation of the farmers of the area, not only among themselves but with the agencies and authorities working on the problem. At the time of the study the most effective association had established a labor information office on Highway 99 where an attempt was made to "sell" the community to transient workers, and had completed negotiations for three camping sites for housing them. This association was also working "to keep ranchers in line and to stop them from stealing labor from one another." Despite these community efforts to procure labor, the survey reveals that five of the rural communities in the county showed a consistently low level of awareness of the methods developed for meeting the labor shortage.

Although farm operations in this area depend upon a large amount of specialized machinery, the farm implement problem has not been considered an acute one, and very little has been done in the way of systematized effort to develop formal sharing and pooling of equipment. Likewise, at the time of the study no agency program was being carried out to induce farmers to meet production goals. Such a program, however, would have been beside the point, except perhaps in the case of dairy production.

San Joaquin County, like other counties throughout the country, conducted scrap and Bond drives. In these, the Boy Scouts, the American Legion, the WPA, and similar organizations had participated, but both the results from these programs and the awareness of them were disappointing. The Bond drive particularly was disappointing. Having been placed in the hands of the three agencies, the American Legion, the rural mail carriers, and the Rural Defense Division, this threefold responsibility, together with the poor timing of the campaign from the agricultural





producer's standpoint, made it completely ineffective. The Rural Defense Division, particularly, objected to its part in this drive not only because its personnel often went to farms previously solicited, but principally because it felt it had been established to meet emergency situations resulting from enemy action and that Bond soliciting was extraneous to the purposes for which it had been mobilized.

The programs most enthusiastically received by the rural people in San Joaquin County were those bearing directly upon precautionary measures designed to prevent enemy attack or to alleviate results of such attack. These programs included the air raid warden system, local volunteer fire fighting companies and programs for feeding fire fighters and for fireproofing clothing, the State militia, airplane spotter stations, and an emergency water supply organization.

The Rural Defense Division established by the Farm Adviser was in charge of the air raid warden system. Although the farm people seemed to be more aware of the workings and purposes of this than any other action program, nevertheless certain conflicts that are significant developed within the program. Despite the fact that the Farm Adviser did not emphasize the importance of the air raid warden assignment, it was clear that the participants considered this to be the main job of the Rural Defense Division. Thus they tended to resent other nonemergency assignments and tended to be uncooperative in such activities as the War Bond drive. Another major conflict was the predominant part played by the American Farm Bureau Federation in the Rural Defense Division. The close cooperation between the Farm Bureau and the Farm Adviser's office, the use of Farm Bureau community centers, and the consistent use of Farm Bureau center chairmen as community chairmen (ranking positions in the Rural Defense Division set-up) lent credence to the opinion held by Grangers and other non-Farm Bureau members that the Rural Defense Division was dominated by the Farm Bureau Federation. Another conflict which arose was caused by the fact that the small town and suburban system of organization at times extended into areas covered by the neighborhood leader system established by the Farm Adviser, creating antagonisms among county officials and volunteer personnel. The survey, as indicated above, showed a higher awareness on the part of rural people of the air raid warden system than any other emergency program in the community, but it was interesting that persons of foreign extraction and rural persons not members of farm operators' households showed decidedly less knowledge of the system than did others.

The rural fire fighting volunteer organization was also set up under the auspices of the Rural Defense Division and was intended to assist the county fire warden and, to a certain extent, be responsible to him. However, few of the 129 volunteer fire companies organized had developed to the point where they could be relied upon. For this, the county warden was blamed by some, the unwillingness of farmers to cooperate by others, and the fact that the organization was set up under the Rural Defense Division and not under the fire warden himself by still others. The county fire warden did not maintain any direct connection with the system of volunteers, and although he seemed to approve of the plan, he had made no effort to integrate it with his own work. As might be expected, then, the people's knowledge of the existence of fire companies was much less than of air raid wardens. In addition to the volunteer companies mentioned above, the Extension Service had carried on an educational campaign on fireproofing clothing and informing women as to the most efficient means of feeding fire fighting crews.





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Thus far little had been done in the community to provide for an emergency water supply, and farmers appeared to have given little thought to the problem.

Rural people in San Joaquin County participated in both militia companies to serve as adjuncts to the State Guard and as airplane spotters, the latter being one of the most actively and enthusiastically accepted war programs among its rural residents.

This in brief is the picture of the war emergency work in San Joaquin County. Despite the fact that county officials and private organizations, volunteers and paid personnel have all bent their effort toward solving these problems, it is highly apparent that the emergency programs have not successfully reached all the rural population and that generally a poor level of awareness exists among that segment of the people. Although they can only be tentative and should be borne out by further analysis or comparative studies of other counties, certain pertinent conclusions can be drawn from the study of San Joaquin County.

(1) Jurisdictional disputes: One of the most pernicious factors in the fulfillment of emergency activities in San Joaquin County was the rivalry between different groups in undertaking various activities. This was apparent, for example, in the overlapping of air raid duties between the systems set up to serve the rural and the suburban areas. Likewise, the threefold responsibility in the carrying out of the Bond drive resulted in ineffective action and resentment within certain groups. Similarly, conflict situations arose when numerous farm labor committees were operating without regard for or coordination with one another. On the basis of interviews taken from county officials, it was clearly obvious that a general lack of cooperation existed among key personnel which inevitably made for inefficiency in carrying out particular programs. Accusations were made that certain officials were attempting to further purely political ambitions and others to further personal ambitions through defense activities. All such conflicts might have been avoided if leaders of programs in conflict had in advance reached mutual agreement as to method of organization and procedure.

(2) Unilateral sponsorship: A major factor underlying jurisdictional strife and antagonism was that the major rural defense organization, the Rural Defense Division, had been sponsored by a single private group, the American Farm Bureau Federation. Despite the fact that such sponsorship was only partial and was not intended to be all inclusive, the popular feeling in the county was that the Rural Defense Division was a Farm Bureau organization. This, of course, tended to antagonize neutral non-Bureau members as well as those who actually opposed this organization. The danger of such a situation is that although the sponsor may not be at fault, the sponsorship by a single group, or even the popular belief that such sponsorship exists may create antagonism and jealousies that lead to jurisdictional disputes.

(3) Misunderstanding of functions: Another major problem was that the working personnel of the Rural Defense Division had an understanding of their function which was varied considerably from that which officially it was designed to accomplish. Its personnel thought of it solely as a network to handle precautionary activities in case of air raids or enemy attack and consequently resented any part it was asked to play in other activities. Since officially it





was supposed to serve as a general agent for the dissemination of information and for achieving cooperation in all war emergency activities, a very real barrier to efficient functioning had grown up.

(4) Inefficiency in use of volunteer help: A tendency had developed on the part of officials in charge to overwork certain groups and to overlook others willing to help. For example, no central file of volunteer workers was maintained from which defense organizations could draw, and certain groups such as the Boy Scouts had been used in house-to-house distribution when such distribution could have been handled more efficiently otherwise.

(5) Integration of defense activities with established administrative units: This study shows the great importance of bringing defense organizations and activities into proper relationship with existing governmental and administrative functions. New activities must be related to pre-existing ones, and old-line officials must be convinced of the value of emergency organizations. This need was revealed particularly in San Joaquin County by the failure to organize the fire fighting units in direct cooperation with the established county fire warden, which has resulted in ineffective action.

(6) Social background: In San Joaquin County the difficulties of effectively organizing rural people were of considerable magnitude because the industrialized nature of agriculture had created a rural society in which local ties were loose and no natural social intercourse between persons living in the same neighborhood existed. This meant that local ties for an effective block system either did not exist or were weak and that "natural leaders" for rural neighborhoods were apt to be functioning only as club or commodity group leaders. Such a situation forced the imposition of block systems upon the people from above and the establishment of artificial neighborhood social groups, factors which are inherently contrary to good community organization.

